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Peggy *and* Patty;

OR,

THE SISTERS

OF

ASHDALE.

VOL. IV.



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OF

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THE SECOND EDITION.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. DODSLEY,
PALL-MALL.

M,DCC,LXXXIV.

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PEGGY AND PATTY.

L E T T E R XXVII.

Mrs. Summers to Mrs. Branville:—

(the two preceding letters not then received) relative to Peggy and Patty.

London,

MY BELOVED FRIEND,

YOU will be grieved at the sad intelligence I have to communicate.—But be not too much alarmed—I am well—but, alas!

VOL. IV.

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my poor Mr. Summers is very, very ill — has been dangerously wounded : — but I hope to Heaven the worst is over : — his surgeon and physician begin now to say, they think, with care, he may recover : — his fever, in consequence of his wound, I thank God, now intermits. — O, my Emma ! think what I have endured for this best of men, and dearest of husbands ! — I write this by his bedside, whilst he is in a sweet sleep ; — may it prove propitious ! — I have watched by my poor George for these five nights ; nor suffered any medicine to be administered but by my hands. — But let me hasten to relieve the

anxious

anxious impatience you feel from what I have already said relative to a *wounded* beloved husband.

Ah! my dear, I have wonderful things to tell you! — Poor Peggy and Patty were, it now fully appears *, most vilely betrayed. — Alas! my heart almost bleeds to write it. — Yes, their seduction was the consequence of the most horrid arts and *shocking outrage*.

Poor unhappy girls! — I have wept at their fate till I can weep no longer.

* The good-natured reader will here feel for poor Mrs. Branville, when she received this account of her friends' innocence, after the recent affair at Ash-grove, and poor Peggy's distracted letter.

An execrable villain personated their brother (my husband) ; and in consequence of that most wicked deception, all the rest has followed in course.—Ah ! lovely innocents ! what may be now their fate ? — or where may they be wandering ?

I must, however, proceed with the sad occasion of my poor Mr. Summers's wound, and of the shocking wretch who gave it.

About five days since, my husband went to dine with a large meeting of gentlemen, at a tavern in Westminster. — After dinner, Captain Fenwick, a most worthy friend of his, having some particular business relative to the East In-

dies to settle with him, they retired into a private room, which they observed was only parted from another by a kind of sliding partition, so very thin that every word spoken in the next room could be most distinctly heard in theirs. They heard the voices of two gentlemen; but Mr. Summers's attention was excessively roused when he plainly heard the following words :

“ But pr'ythee tell me, Jackall,
 “ did you never hear what became
 “ of those girls; Peggy and Patty
 “ Summers ? upon my soul they
 “ were fine girls. — What a glorious
 “ scheme was that of yours,
 “ of personating their brother, then

“ in Bengal;—you deserved a statue to be erected to your memory.—But do, Patrick, tell me how that affair happened.”

You will, my friend, easily imagine the astonishment of Mr. Summers.—Mr. Fenwick conjured him to *rein in* his impatience for a few moments, to hear the sequel of this amazing conversation; which continued in this manner:—The most wicked of wretches replied, “ I’ll tell you how it happened:—I had been down in the North, on a few commissions for Lord ——, one of which was, to look at some girls for him:—when returning, much chagrined at my

“ bad luck, chance threw me into
 “ the Carlisle coach ; where I found
 “ alone, travelling to London, two
 “ of the most beautiful young crea-
 “ tures in the universe, this Peggy
 “ and Patty Summers :——I soon
 “ found, by their extreme simpli-
 “ city and blushes, that they were
 “ *quite* the innocent young things
 “ I wanted ; and that it would be
 “ at least a cool hundred in my
 “ way”——

Here my husband, starting up,
 was going to exclaim aloud ; but
 his friend once more begged him to
 have one moment's patience, till
 the ultimate discovery was made.—

The wretch they plainly heard pro-

ceed in his horrid account in these words :—

“ Never, surely, were two such
 “ sweet rogues ; such was their
 “ simplicity, that I soon gathered
 “ from them their little history ;
 “ namely, that they were from a
 “ remote village in Cumberland ;
 “ —that their father was a poor
 “ curate — (good ground, was not
 “ this, to work upon ?) —that they
 “ were going to London to some re-
 “ lation, to procure them a genteel
 “ settlement ;—that they had a great
 “ many brothers and sisters ;—but
 “ it at last came out, that they had
 “ a brother in Bengal, daily ex-
 “ pected to come over, who had
 “ been

“ been gone so long, they had no
 “ knowledge of his person.

“ It was not in nature to resist
 “ so delicious a plan as then opened
 “ itself at once to my view ; — in
 “ short, my impudent genius as-
 “ sisted me, and I at once took on
 “ me the character of this long-
 “ absent brother. I affected to be
 “ overjoyed at the happy event of
 “ meeting with them so unexpect-
 “ edly. Surely it was the *richest*
 “ thought that ever entered the
 “ heart of man, and most fully
 “ answered my purpose ; for the
 “ poor simple things, artless and
 “ unsuspecting as innocence itself,
 “ at once *took* the bait, and with
 “ joy

“ joy received my embrace.—They
 “ called me their dear George, their
 “ beloved brother, and, in short,
 “ permitted, during the whole jour-
 “ ney, an hundred innocent liber-
 “ ties, which the freedom of such
 “ near relations daily warrants.”

Here, my Emma, I pass over the
 extreme agitation of Mr. Summers,
 who with the utmost difficulty could
 be prevented from rushing in to the
 wicked villain ;—who proceeded as
 follows :

“ If I had intended *myself* to have
 “ seduced these poor simple girls,
 “ I certainly should not have per-
 “ sonated their brother ; — but I
 “ knew

“ knew *better* my interest. — I
 “ knew Lord ----- is most bounti-
 “ ful on acquiring a new mistress ;
 “ and to say truth, girls are now
 “ such a mere *drug*, that one may
 “ at any time be stocked with half
 “ a hundred of them. — Well, at
 “ London we arrived, in tip-top
 “ spirits ;—though we took up at
 “ Northampton a queer, formal par-
 “ son,—(my poor uncle, Emma!).
 “ —I was cursedly afraid he would
 “ smoke me ; — but no — all was
 “ safe, and I carried off, that very
 “ night, my charming prize to
 “ good mother H-----’s, who per-
 “ sonated to a miracle a cousin
 “ Bennet of the little simpletons.”

(O Emma,

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 “night, my charming prize to
 “good mother H-----’s, who per-
 “sonated to a miracle a cousin
 “Bennet of the little simpletons.”

(O Emma,

(O Emma, what a horrid plot was here!)

“ You may easily guess ” (continued this villain) “ what followed in such a situation ;—you
 “ would have died to have seen the
 “ old mother top her part to a
 “ miracle ; and two of her girls
 “ for the *Miss Bennets*.—We were
 “ obliged to have recourse to a few
 “ *potions*—usual on those occasions ;
 “ for it would have taken the time
 “ of the siege of Troy, to have seduced them in the common way :
 “ —they had had a de---sh strict
 “ education of chastity and modesty, &c. forsooth, under the old
 “ putt their father ; so we were
 “ obliged

“ obliged to do what was done—by
“ methods you may guess.”—

Mr. Summers could hear no more ; but rushing from his friend, in a rage, as you may suppose, not to be described, ran at once into the room where the infamous reciter of the above horrid tale was sitting.—

“ Villain ! scoundrel ! ” (said he, in an agony of passion, drawing his sword)
“ this instant I demand satisfaction
“ of you, for the shocking imposture
“ of daring to personate *me*, *George*
“ *Summers*, in order to further your
“ horrid crime of seducing my poor
“ wretched sisters ; whose ruin, pri-
“ marily owing to thee, thou ex-
“ crable

“ crable villain ! calls for vengeance
 “ on thy head ;—draw this instant,
 “ —thou infernal scoundrel ! ”—

Mr. Fenwick, who ran into the room after my husband, imagining bloodshed would be the consequence, gave me an account of every syllable of this affair. — He says, on this just rage of Mr. Summers, never did he see such a contemptible figure of mean cowardice as the wretch before him :—he turned pale—hesitated—his lips quivered—he was absolutely (hardened in wickedness as he must be) ready to sink into the earth, at such an unexpected summons to fight. —
 “ Mean villain ” (continued my husband)

band) "draw this instant!—Hah!"
 (said he, looking attentively in his
 face) "what have I another charge
 " against thee?—Yes,—I see—I
 " see you are the very identical raf-
 " cal, who dared to affront grossly
 " a lady (now my wife) coming out
 " of the opera-house;—insolent
 " wretch! your design, I doubt not,
 " was to carry her off."—The raf-
 cal, trembling, said, "If he must
 " fight, it must be in the garden be-
 " hind the house."—Mr. Summers
 instantly took him by the nose, and
 dragged him down stairs.—Being
 now arrived in the garden, he at
 length drew his sword;—a scuffle
 ensued, in which my husband was
 wounded;

wounded ; but believing it not the least dangerous, disregarded it, making a furious pass at his mean-spirited antagonist, — who cowardly dropped his sword, and begged his life. Mr. Summers, who has great personal bravery and knowledge of the sword, stood over him for some moments ; but, as the wretch had no weapon, scorned to take advantage of that circumstance. — “ I will submit to any punishment” (said the rascal) “ if you will but give me *life*. — I am not fit to die. — “ I will tell you all. — Lord -----, “ and Sir ----- kept your sisters : “ — I wrote to their parents in the “ country, feigning their hands : — “ but

“but indeed I know not *now* where they are.”—Mr. Fenwick proposed kicking the mean scoundrel through the room, where the gentlemen were assembled that had dined there; this was put in execution, the noise of a duel having drawn most of them to the parlour-door, adjoining the garden. — “Hah! Jackall, (cried they) what still in being!—we thought you had been hanged at Tyburn above a year ago, for the forgery on the bank of England.”—Here he ran the gantlet indeed, and was at length fairly kicked out into the street, and pretty severely pelted by the mob, with dirt, stones, &c.

Mean time, my poor Mr. Summers's wound (neglected to be examined) had began to be very painful:—he was now put into a chair, and brought home, Mr. Fenwick attending him. — Guess, my dear, my grief, my amazement, to see the most amiable of husbands in that condition ! The best surgeons were immediately procured ; who declared the wound not to be so dangerous as the high fever, (owing to the extreme, just rage my poor George had been flung into) which disorder was now coming on apace ; and for several days he continued extremely ill ; but, I thank Heaven, the fever now gives way to medicine.

cine. — O my friend ! what have I suffered, to hear his delirious ravings of his poor Peggy and Patty !—

Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, (who stand aghast at the matchless impudence of mother H----'s *personating* the latter) and all other friends, are ransacking London over, to find the dear, ruined girls—I fear, alas ! in vain ; they possibly are now *no more* ; or perhaps hid in some obscure corner, the very last resort of ——. O I cannot dwell on the heart-rending subject !

But this moment my George awakes. — Adieu then for the present.

I thank Heaven, he is better,—

wonderfully better;—able, my Emma, to sit up in his bed, and appears quite composed.

Only think, my dear, of this infamous—Jackall, I understand, is his name—being the very impudent fellow who assaulted me in the opera-house; no doubt, but with the worst intentions—most probably to add to the numerous list of the vile lord Racket's seraglio. — That assault, however, (no thanks to this wretch's *intention*) has been the means of making me the most happy of women. — I am interrupted: I will date again.

— Just Heaven! how awfully amaz-

ing are thy doings! — Divine vengeance has indeed seized the horrid villain, who deceived the poor sisters—the infamous pander Jackall. Mr. Fenwick has just brought the following account: That on the night he had seen Mr. Summers, a capital forgery being laid to his charge, and he apprehending it was impossible for him to elude, as he has often done, the justice due to him, in a fit of frantic desperation cut his throat; but did not the business so effectually as to occasion present death;—for he has lingered, it seems, some days, the most frightful object of horror and despair that ever was beheld; sometimes raving,

sometimes even howling, and cursing all about him : — his agonies, they say, are beyond all description : — twice he has torn open the wound, to which the surgeons attempted to apply some remedy. — Yesterday, it seems, he was absolutely mad, and held down in his bed by several men ; who declare the blasphemies he uttered, and crimes he talked of having committed, were too shocking for repetition : — at length, cursing his own being (horrid to tell !) with a frightful groan he expired.

I have no doubt but Divine *Justice* will soon reach *all* the *parties* of that *black* affair — the seduction of two the most innocent, lovely young women

women on earth ;—and no doubt of many more, now wretched outcasts in the streets.

Our good cousin Bennet is my constant visiter ; whilst her worthy husband is very busy with a neighbouring justice of peace, being about to lay an information against the house of the wicked mother H----

I could wish, methinks, to be Jack Ketch for one five minutes, to hang that vile woman myself at Tyburn—though that would not be an adequate punishment for her crimes.

Adieu, my Emma.—I direct this to Ash-grove ; for I hope you are not yet gone to the abbey ; but if you are, it will be forwarded.

Write soon:—you would, if you knew how much comfort your observing that injunction would give to

Your tenderly affectionate,

Lacy Summers.

LETTER XXVIII.

Mrs. Belmont to Mrs. Summers.

Belmont Hall.

DEAR MADAM,

THOUGH you have often kindly solicited my correspondence,

yet

• Left the reader should wonder at the familiar address of Mrs. Belmont, to a lady with whom it has not been mentioned she was

yet it is with much *un*-willingness I write ; as, I am sorry to say, I must begin an intercourse so desirable to me, with a very melancholy circumstance ; namely, with the death of Mr. Branville. Our dear friend begs I will acquaint you with this interesting event, which happened rather suddenly.

You will excuse Mrs. Branville's writing at this time :—she could not at present be so minute in her account of this misfortune, as she says

was acquainted—it may be necessary to observe, that Mrs. Summers had been, the first year of Mrs. Branville's marriage, at the abbey on a visit ; consequently was then well acquainted with the amiable Mrs. Belmont.

your

your kind partiality, in every thing relative to her concerns, induces you to desire.—I only wish I could *open my* correspondence with a more agreeable circumstance.

Mrs. Branville hopes you received her late * congratulatory letter on the recovery of Mr. Summers from his wound; in which she endeavoured to give you an account of the extreme misery she has suffered on the occasion of poor Miss Summers's very affecting letter:—but I will not dwell on the sad sub-

* This letter was not thought necessary to be inserted, as containing merely her congratulations for Mr. Summers's recovery, and sorrow for not having had it in her power to relieve the poor sisters.

ject :

ject :—suffice it to say, the unfortunate prohibition she was laid under, relative to the wretched sisters, and her having since heard the circumstances of their cruel usage so fully authenticated, have been all together too much for her tender heart (the seat of gentle compassion, and of every other virtue) to sustain.

I have mentioned the circumstance of Mr. Branville's dying suddenly ; but I have not related some particular incidents relative to it, (which I wish I could conceal from every one, but such a friend as *yourself* to our beloved Emma, as, poor man ! this event was certainly owing to his own imprudence, and
merely

merely an accident, occasioned by his ill-judged and causeless curiosity.

Thus it happened : One day last week our charming friend (her husband being gone out to spend the day) favoured me with her company, to assist me in the arrangement of some shell-flowers and fossils, with which I am going to decorate a grotto, in a rock not far from our gardens.

You will imagine, my dear madam, how happy the company of my beloved Emma made me ; and we were singularly lucky, in not being interrupted in our amusement of the shell flowers, the whole day, by company ; till, just at tea-time,

who

who should drop in upon us but poor young Ashley, the unfortunate nephew of Mr. Branville.—He is, without exception, the most amiable of men, and the delight of every company he appears in.—After tea he was so obliging as to sit down to the harpsicord, and give us most of the finest songs in the sacred oratorio of Handel's Messiah; which he performed with inimitable taste and execution. The hours insensibly glided away: at length Mrs. Branville, looking on her watch, exclaimed, "My stars! it is already eight o'clock!—Mr. Branville will think I am lost; tho' he will not return home till ten, at which time I

ordered

ordered the chariot to come for me.

I think you remember, my dear Mrs. Summers, our little music-room, as I call it (in which we were sitting;) but perhaps you have forgot that it is hung with some fine old *arras*, which has been many years in the family. This circumstance I mention, as once or twice that evening methought I saw the *arras* move: "Bless me" (said I) "what stirs the hangings?"—"It is only the wind," said Mr. Ashley. He had now began another charming song, when on a sudden we heard a most violent outcry among the servants, as if some dreadful

dreadful accident had happened :—
 I heard the butler exclaim—“ He
 “ is dead ! — he is dead ! — Mr.
 “ Branville is dead !—good God !”
 —You will imagine our terror ;
 and that we instantly rushed out
 of the room, to see the cause of this
 dreadful alarm.—Mr. Ashley (ex-
 cellent young man !) darted forth
 like rapid lightning to the spot ;
 and, with a tenderness which does
 him the highest honour, raised his
 dying uncle in his arms (from the
 bottom of some stone steps, down
 which it seems he had fallen) and,
 supporting his bleeding head on his
 bosom, carried him into an adjoining
 parlour. — I screamed — Mrs.
 Branville

Branville fainted.—To add to our distress, Mr. Belmont was gone a journey for some days.—Mr. Ashley, still tenderly holding, and calling on his uncle's name, as if, alas! he had been the dearest friend on earth, was almost covered with his blood, which flowed in a stream from a very large cut in his head:—his skull too appeared to be fractured; and one of his arms was broken:—in short, he was a terrible spectacle.—I had a bed instantly prepared, and surgeons were immediately sent for, as there yet seemed some small remains of life.—The incomparable Ashley divided his tender affiduities betwixt his uncle
and

and our poor friend, who had fainted successively.—I will not describe the misery of this night, for it is impossible.—At length the surgeons arrived, who declared Mr. Branville to be then alive, but that it was impossible he could live two days.—Several remedies being applied, in some hours he opened his eyes:—his affectionate nephew was then kneeling by his bedside, but Mr. Branville, I believe, knew him not.

Before night he began to speak a few sentences, broken, however, and disjointed; — yet we gathered from our servants' account, and what the dying man uttered, the

following particulars : — Our footman says, that about seven in the evening of this fatal adventure, Mr. Branville alighting, came into the hall, and asked if we had any company in the drawing-room : — that his answer was, “ We “ had no company but Mrs. Branville and Mr. Ashley.” — “ *Mr. Ashley!* ” he exclaimed, in great seeming astonishment ; — and on the servant’s offering to light him to the music-room, he declined it, saying, he knew the way very well, and that the lights in our great hall were sufficient. — Here the servant left him. — And we just gathered from himself, that a jea-

lousy he had conceived (but mentioned not for whom) had caused him to slip behind the *arras*, which is open to the passage that leads to the music-room, in order to hear what conversation passed. — Poor man! it hurts me to think he should descend to such a mean shift, on so *unnecessary* an occasion. — How long he staid there we know not; but most certain it is, he lost his labour, as not a single syllable passed in the music-room, Mr. Ashley being playing, as I before have told you, all the time on the harpsicord.

I now must proceed to the ac-

count of our butler ; who says, On going down to his pantry to prepare for supper, he was astonished to see Mr. Branville lay as dead, and covered with blood, at the foot of a large pair of stone stairs. — I suppose, poor wretch, in returning from his *biding*-place, he had missed his way, and in the dark fell down those stairs. What followed his being found in that deplorable condition, I have already related.

Mrs. Branville, sweet woman ! on hearing this strange confession of his, kneeled by him, and averred her innocence in regard to his very unjust suspicions of her. — He looked at her with steadfastness, and
replied,

replied, " I believe thee, child, and
 " may God bless thee ! "

Poor Ashley here flung himself
 on his knees, and most pathetically
 begged for a blessing also. — " Bless
 " me ! — bless me ! " — (cried he)
 " my uncle, also bless your poor
 " Edward ! who, I call God to wit-
 " ness, never offended you." —
 This scene was so particularly af-
 fecting, I could scarce refrain from
 weeping aloud. — The petition of
 the unfortunate nephew was how-
 ever totally disregarded. Whether
 the dying man observed him or
 not, I will not pretend to say,
 but certain it is, he made no kind
 of answer ; and it is a most dis-

tressing circumstance, that he should
 not take the least notice of this
 most admirable and affectionate re-
 lation. — Mrs. Branville, with the
 piety of an angel, prayed for an
 hour by her dying husband, from
 the office for the sick, in our excel-
 lent liturgy. Never did she appear in
 so heavenly a light :—her fine eyes
 and hands lifted to Heaven, as if to
 supplicate mercy for the departing
 spirit of the dying man before us.
 We all kneeled round her. This
 was indeed the *last* office that was
 performed to poor Mr. Branville :
 —he expired about an hour after,
 in a convulsion fit. — May Heaven
 have mercy on his soul ! — I only
 wish

wish he could have died in perfect charity with his worthy nephew :— he certainly owed him some *old* grudge, which caused him to disinherit him ; but on what account no one knows.—As to this ridiculous *jealousy*, as he has acquitted his innocent wife, he also must acquit the poor young man.—But peace to his ashes !——

Mrs. Branville behaves on this occasion, as she does on every other, with the utmost propriety. To say that she *grieves immoderately*, for a man, whom it is impossible she could ever passionately love with an excess of affection, is saying what no one could possibly believe. She how-

ever laments his loss, as a worthy kind friend.—

How excessively to be pitied, my dear Mrs. Summers, are poor Mr. Ashley and our sweet young friend : — they certainly love each other, with an affection, however, *pure* as that of angels ; — but yet such is the excess of honour and delicacy of both, that nothing *voluntarily* has ever transpired, on either side, that could warrant the least shadow of a well-grounded jealousy in poor Mr. Branville. True it is, the day these young folks first met at my house, the confusion of our dear Emma, I observed, was great. — Some time afterwards I mention-

ed to her accidentally the name of Ashley;—she blushed;—we were alone, and I frankly asked her if she had formerly been acquainted with him.—At length, in her innocent unaffected manner, she related to me the prettiest little simple tale imaginable, which she says you know as well as herself:—it was indeed no more than what two of the most angelic of beings might have felt for each other. No doubt but she must be much surprized to see this gentle youth, this unknown stranger—whose name she only knew to be *Mr. Edward*—turn out at last to be the *nephew* of her lord and master!

Indeed

Indeed I think their case pitiable :—for you know, my friend, the above near alliance renders their being united, absolutely impossible :—not that the young man is in fact *related* to our Emma; yet the world,—the world—would censure such a step; and her delicacy, I am convinced, would be shocked at the bare mention of it.—No, there is an everlasting bar, you see, placed between this most amiable pair :—for reasons, no doubt, the All-wise Disposer of events sees best.

Mr. Branville was interred most pompously in the chapel of the abbey, among a long train of ancestors, in the family vault. He has left
our

our charming friend all his estate, and a noble fortune besides in money; but not one single shilling to *poor Edward*. — She is still with me, and will remain some little time longer here, when I will return with her to the abbey—I must, I think, be some little comfort to her.

Mr. Ashley, who remained here a few days, till his uncle was interred, did not see Mrs. Branville till the morning of his departure. He most tenderly enquired after her health. I asked to see him in my dressing-room, where she was sitting with me: — never was a more affecting interview; — indeed, they are most delicately circumstanced. — He approached

proached her with tender confusion,
 —(and O how beautiful did she appear in her widow's dress!)—and, bowing low, begged, if he could be of the least service in settling any family affairs, she would command him. — “ She was,” (she said) “ obliged, exceedingly obliged”—her voice trembled; she could not proceed:—she looked at me, I thought, at that moment, with *intreating* eyes, *not* to leave the room; I certainly did not.—“ You are going then,” (said I) “ Mr. Ashley?” “ Yes, madam, I have a friend, who is so kind as to solicit a small commission for me in the army, for I must think of—”

he

he hesitated — he looked down. — I felt a tear that moment glisten in mine eye :—his extreme youth,—his late cruel usage, (I must call it) and his unprotected state, seemed to demand it. The poor young man had put himself in deep mourning, out of respect to his uncle. — He now arose in order to depart:—Mrs. Branville drew a diamond brilliant ring from her finger, of about an hundred guineas value : — “ Mr. “ Ashley,” (said she) “ pray accept this trifle, as an earnest of “ my future *friendship*.”—She laid a stress on the word *friendship*, which was equally kind and delicate; as if she meant he should understand she

3

would

would be his *friend* to assist him, but in no character more *near* than a *friend*. The poor young man took the ring :—he could not speak :—his eyes, however, *looked* an hundred tender sentiments ; and bowing low, left the room.——At that moment, methinks, I would have given half what I am worth, that these most amiable young people had not such an insurmountable bar of *relationship* placed between them :—but *so* it is, and must be submitted to. — Our dear Emma sat about a moment, in a profound silence, after he had left the room ; — then starting up, said she was going to her apartment, as she believed it was near the hour of *blow* dressing

—dressing for dinner.——She sends an hundred loves to you.

Need I say, that a letter from her dear Mrs. Summers will give the greatest pleasure, both to her and to,
Madam,

Your very affectionate friend,

Harriot Belmont?

MANY letters, in the space of the following three months, passed between Mrs. Summers and her charming friend;—but they are not inserted, containing nothing more than the sentiments of a most sincere friendship, and nothing essentially necessary to the thread of our history.

Mrs.

Mrs. Branville remained at the abbey, *truly enjoying* her large fortune, in relieving every object of distress for miles around her. — It may indeed be justly said of this excellent young lady, “ That she gave
 “ raiment to the naked, bread to
 “ the hungry, and that the blessing
 “ of those that were ready to perish,
 “ came upon her.” — Not content with exercising her extensive benevolence in that part of the country, she visited the place of her former abode (before marriage) in Cumberland : — the happiness of her parents, it must be imagined, was great, in the enjoyment of a visit from their darling child. — She diffused her benevolence,

nevolence to every object of distress, thro' the villages of Ashdale; Moss-hill, &c. She entered the cottages of the poor peasants, who had known her from infancy ; — but they were amazed, that so fine, so great a lady as *Madam Branville* could (they said) visit such *poor folks* !—so little could these innocent beings separate *riches* from its usual attendant, *pride*.

Our lovely widow found the name of the ever-lamented good Mr. and Mrs. Summers still remembered with tears ; in which she sincerely joined. She one evening stole out alone to visit the favourite haunts, where she often used to meet her beloved Peggy and Patty

Summers : — the copse, — the stile,
 — the wood, awakened an hundred
 tender scenes : — she sat down a few
 moments under the old oak, round
 which a beautiful honey-suckle was
 blooming in its highest perfection,
 and which had been planted by the
 hands of Peggy : — she gazed intent-
 ly at this emblem of beauty : “ Ah ! ”
 (cried she) “ lovely flower, which
 “ abounds as much in moral in-
 “ struction as in sweetness, would
 “ the hand that planted thee——”
 she could not proceed ; she burst
 into tears ; and left a spot, so *full* of
 matter for reflection. In her way
 home she passed the hazle copse,
 where she had first beheld her—yet

too dear Edward:—"Here" (cried she) "a nosegay of the fairest flowers was presented me by that too amiable youth:—here I first observed that sympathetic glance, which conveyed unutterable things—but let me" (said she, deeply sighing) "fly from a spot which recalls sentiments *now* to be ever buried in oblivion; and which it would be even *criminal* in *me* to indulge:—let me hasten from these tender scenes—it is not *good* for me to stay. — Ah! poor Ashley!"

But, leaving this charming woman in the practice of every virtue, the compassionate reader may perhaps

wish to know what in *reality* was now the fate of the poor disinherited, but worthy, nephew of Mr. Brantville.—Distractedly in love with his adorable Emma, he wandered from the country to London, ardently hoping, that could he obtain a commission in the army, by means of his friend's interest, he might, in the first action he should be engaged in with our treacherous enemies * in America, by a glorious death in defence of his king and country, at once lose all remembrance of his most unfortunate passion.—When he

* This work was written during our unhappy troubles with the Americans, and our other combined foes.

reflected,

reflected, that the woman he adored had been the wife of his uncle, he was almost in a state of desperation; and was ready to lay violent hands on a life, he knew was doomed to wretchedness, from the above unfortunate circumstance; but with Hamlet he yet thought

“ ’Twas nobler in the mind to suffer

“ The slings and arrows of outrageous
“ fortune,

“ Than, by opposing, end them.”——

To add to the distresses of this worthy young man, thro’ an omission of the person who undertook to procure him a post in the army, he was entirely disappointed of it;—

and, to increase his vexations, his small stock of finances was nearly exhausted.

One day, when this distressed youth was sitting in his apartment, in a most melancholy mood, meditating on that state of poverty, and all the horrors of its train, which must now soon, he saw, overtake him, a letter was brought him, carefully sealed up, directed in a hand he knew not:—he opened it, and, to his inexpressible astonishment, found the contents were Bank bills, to the amount of ten thousand pounds.—in fact, ten bills of a thousand pounds each. — He sat, for some moments, almost deprived of motion,

tion, at a gift so amazing—so unexpected: — for a *gift* he found it was; as on a small piece of paper (but in a hand he was not acquainted with) he saw these words: —
 “ Accept from a *friend* the inclosed
 “ mark of *esteem*.”

“ My God !” (cried he) “ how
 “ wonderful—how inexplicable are
 “ thy doings !” — He was almost petrified, as well he might, with amazement !—*who* could remit him *such* a sum, was the most wonderful thing in nature !—He ran over, in his almost distracted thoughts, a number of his friends ; as, the worthy Mr. Belmont, Sir Thomas Douglas, &c.—Mr. Belmont’s for-

tune he knew was good; but he could not think it possible or probable that he should remit him such a sum: — as little likely was it any other of his acquaintance would:—in short, it was a most inexplicable affair, and he looked upon it as the immediate gift of Heaven, sent by some ministring angel.

We shall however, in due time, satisfy the curiosity of the reader, *who* was the donor of this most noble gift.

Mr. Ashley, in a few days, wrote down to the worthy Mr. Belmont, to ask his opinion how he would advise him to place out this extraordinary sum to the greatest advantage;

tage; whether it would not be prudent, with this *gift of Heaven*, to set out at once to trade in the East Indies, having now such a stock in hand: — he was himself much inclined to travel, as he thought it would be the likeliest means of curing the hopeless passion for his adorable Emma, which gave him inexpressible misery.

Mr. Belmont returned him for answer to his letter, that he wished to see him in Wales, as Sir Thomas Douglas and he could better talk the matter over, than a written letter could explain: — he also expressed equal joy and wonder at a present so noble and unexpected. —

Mr.

Mr. Ashley accordingly set out for Belmont Hall; where we shall at present leave him, and enquire after the poor sisters.

We left Peggy in a most deplorable situation; but, by the tender cares of Patty, she was at length restored to be just able to drag on a miserable being for some time longer: — *would* we could say, that with returning health it had been possible for these wretched girls to have got into some *honest* livelihood: — but, alas! without friends, clothes, or money, an attempt to get into any family, as a servant, was impracticable: — who could recommend them?—or
 what

what shop would employ in needle-work two wretched prostitutes?—

Peggy, 'tis true, had endeavoured, when her fever had left her, to get a few shillings by *netting*; but this was precarious, and she could get no customers for her ingenuity:—the streets (horrid to say) were now again the wretched means of these truly miserable girls just supporting a being, of all others in this life the most deplorable.—They *detested* this course, and yet from the horrors of their poverty were obliged to pursue it:—their misery was extreme:—they might justly have applied these emphatic lines of Shake-

speare

appear to their wretched livelihood, though that admirable author uses them on another occasion :—

——“ My *poverty*, but not my *will*, consents.”——

“ Sharp misery had worn them to the bone.”

In vain had their excellent brother made the strictest enquiry :— in vain had the worthy Mrs. Bennet used her utmost endeavours to discover where the wretched girls had retired. — But a truce with this melancholy subject for the present.

The lovely widow remained some time in Cumberland, from which place

place frequent letters passed between Mrs. Summers, herself, and the amiable Mrs. Belmont; but they are by no means necessary to *our history*.

Mrs. Branville was now returned to the Abbey (business relative to her estate requiring her immediate presence there). — We next present the reader with a letter from Mrs. Belmont to her fair correspondent in London, as it carries on the thread of our story.

LETTER

LETTER XXIX.

Mrs. Belmont to Mrs. Summers.

Belmont Hall.

MY DEAR MADAM,

WHAT an exalted character is our beloved Emma! — I am absolutely lost in astonishment at her unbounded generosity: — what think you she has now done?

Mr. Belmont and I have discovered, that she, some little time since, in the most delicate manner, as from an unknown hand, has remitted to poor Ned Ashley the noble sum in Bank bills of ten thousand pounds:—true as you live!—

What a magnanimity of mind — what innate grandeur of soul—does this charming woman possess! I really look up to her as to a being of some superior order. — Not the smallest, the most distant hint, has the angel given me of this matter herself: — neither would it, I suppose (like many more of her noble *benevolences*) have ever been discovered, had not her lawyer, the only person privy to this generous gift, been sitting over a bottle with Mr. Belmont, Sir Thomas Douglas, and poor Ashley, who has been alternately staying at Douglas Hall and with us for some little time, till his
 affairs

affairs are quite settled, and till it be determined whether the West or East Indies is to be the place in which he is to bury his sorrows and hopeless passion.

In vain had we all been racking our brains who the generous donor of this ten thousand pounds could be ;—nay, even before Emma herself, have I expressed my pleasing astonishment at the event ; — but, *fly girl* as she is, not a word escaped her relative to her knowledge of the giver ; and indeed it had never entered my head (generous to an extreme as she is) that she was that person.

But

But Mr. Forbes, her lawyer, is, to use an expression of my favourite Shakespear,

“ So loose of soul——”

that in his cups, not one secret whatever can he keep : — and from this foible of his, he made the above discovery, in the following manner :

As the gentlemen I have mentioned were sitting over their bottle, poor Forbes, half seas over, filled out a bumper,—“ Come,” (said he, being asked for a toast) “ I’ll give “ you an angel upon earth—here’s “ the noble widow Branville :”— (here, my husband says, poor Ash-

ley in a moment was the colour of scarlet)—“ she’s a dainty creature ;

“ what a noble soul does that wo-

“ man possess !—I know—I know

“ a little—but *mum* for that :—but

“ why should her exalted generosity

“ be concealed ? no ;—it ought to

“ be wrote in letters of gold.”—

Then, turning suddenly round to

poor Ashley, “ You little thought,

“ young man, from whom the *ten*

“ *thousand* pounds came :—but your

“ noble *aunt*, your *aunt Branville*

“ was the benefactress ; and I sealed

“ the notes up with these very hands

“ of mine, and directed the letter.

“ —Come, here’s her health in a

“ bumper.”

I leave

I leave you, my dear friend, to guess what the emotions of poor Edward were on this occasion :—he turned pale — he was not able to support the scene, but instantly arose and left the room : — the emphasis on the *cutting* words, *aunt Branville*, sunk deep, I doubt not.

When we went to supper, I enquired for Mr. Ashley ; the servants told me he was gone to bed with a violent head-ach : the next morning there was a melancholy and peculiar air of tenderness spread thro' his fine countenance, which I cannot express.—His *knowledge* of what this prating lawyer has revealed, will not be the means of *curing* his pas-

sion; but if it would admit of an encrease, would certainly add to it. I pity him excessively: — my Mr. Belmont is quite wretched about him. — He says, he is convinced, hopeless as this unfortunate passion must be on both sides, (for he knows and sees it) it will be the death of both. — Certain it is, the young man has every appearance of a declining state of health; — and a low fever, he continually has upon him, makes us very apprehensive of the event. Our sweet Emma too has a languor about her — has lost her appetite — can get no sleep; — in short, they both love each other to distraction.

A few

A few days after the above discovery, of the noble giver of the generous present, as above mentioned, I saw her alone—I affected to look mysteriously.

“What a pity it is,” (said I)

“Mr. *Forbes*, who I really believe

“to be a worthy man, should be

“such a *blab* in his cups.”—

“Why,” (said she *eagerly*, and blushing) “what has he discover-

“ed?”—“Nay,” (said I, smiling)

“I can have *my secrets*, as well as

“*you your’s, my Emma* ;”—“But,—

“but, what has he blabbed?”—

“Nay,” (returned I) “*only* that you

“sent *Ned Asbley* ten thousand

“pounds.—Ah! my dear, I have

“ long *suspected* you to be more than
 “ human ; *now* I am convinced of
 “ it.”—I then extolled, as it justly
 deserved, so noble an action.

“ Bless me,” (said the loveliest
 of women) “ there is nothing so ex-
 “ traordinary in it : — I have more
 “ —more, my Harriet, than I can
 “ spend — and *poor* Mr. Ashley,
 “ from his education — from his
 “ long-expected hopes of a large
 “ fortune — from — from his re-
 “ duced state of circumstances, me-
 “ rits justly every thing that *can*
 “ be done for him. — I only wish”
 (continued she) “ to see *two* events
 “ happen : — one, that the *poor*
 “ young man was settled as his birth
 “ and

“ and merits deserve : — the other,
 “ that he was married,” (here she
sighed) “ to some woman that could
 “ make him happy.”

I tapped her cheek—“ Ah ! my
 “ dear,” (said I) “ that sigh of
 “ your’s convinces me that *your last*
 “ wish was not quite so *sincere* as
 “ your *first*. But come, let us
 “ *walk* in the garden.”

Indeed, I make it a rule to speak
 of him as little as possible ; for, as
 they never *can* come together, you
 know it would be cruel to feed this
 hopeless passion on either side.

But this moment I see her com-
 ing up the avenue : she beckons
 me ;—you will, I know, think this

a sufficient excuse for my abrupt conclusion: Adieu, therefore.—Believe me

Most sincerely your's,

Harriet Belmont.

LETTER XXX.

Mrs. Summers to Mrs. Branville.

London.

MY DEAR EMMA,

ARE you really determined to excel every human being, in every virtue, in every moral excellence?—Your charming friend Mrs. Belmont has told me *all*—all your noble

noble munificence to the amiable Edward. — How do I *revere* your goodness ! — and how do I rejoice, that the friend of

“ My heart of hearts,”

(as Hamlet says) has it so much in her power to reward suffering virtue, in its every form. — Your noble conduct (my incomparable friend) in this instance, as well as in every other, naturally flowed to my pen ; but I have, alas ! a subject at my heart, which engrosses my almost every thought, except where *yourself* is concerned. — Oh, my dear ! how shall I tell you ? — In what language can I paint the deep concern of my
beloved

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Most sincerely your's,

Harriet Belmont.

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beloved

beloved husband and myself, when I say, that he has at length seen—(we believe it to be her)—his poor sister, the wretched Peggy, in ----- (do I live to write it?)—wandering a night-walker in the streets?—Oh my Emma!—your own heart, the seat of tender compassion, will dictate to you what mine—what the most tender of brothers, must feel on this sad occasion. Mr. Summers cannot, however, be absolutely *certain* it *was* the miserable girl :—but yet there is *every reason* that can be supposed, next to entire conviction, that *she must* be the *lost* sister we lament ; you too will think as I do, when I relate the following particulars.

About

About a week since, as Mr. Summers was returning from the St. Alban's tavern, past twelve o'clock at night, he was accosted in the Hay-market by a young creature of the town, who asked him to give her a glass of wine; — as my husband is the very last man in the world who would comply with any request of one of the *class* she appeared to be of, he bid her be gone about her business.——“Alas! sir,” (said this unhappy woman)——“’tis
 “misery alone induces me to ask
 “your charity; I am *perishing*
 “with hunger; I have a sister dy-
 “ing with want.” — She wept.
 There was something of *energy* so
pathetic

pathetic (Mr. Summers says) in the plaintive voice and timid manner of this wretched girl, that he turned round to look at the distressed object, (which he had not before done) and the moon shining extremely bright, he had a full view of her person; she was tall, and appeared finely shaped, and * a countenance, tho' then emaciated and pale, yet beautiful: her dress was shabby to an extreme, but seemed the remains of better days. The humanity of Mr. Summers was shocked to see

* It was impossible, that from a sight of this unhappy girl's person, Mr. Summers could recognize *his sister*, as he had left England when she was quite a child.

so young, so amiable a girl in such evident distress.—She again begged he would bestow some trifle on her, —adding, “ I was not born to beg.” My husband instantly flung her half a crown, saying, “ There, young “ woman, buy yourself some food, “ and get some honest livelihood.” — He walked away hastily from her; he observed she burst into tears, and heard her exclaim aloud — “ God bless—God bless you, sir ! “ —Peggy Summers—Patty Sum- “ mers, will bless you for ever.”— My husband plainly heard this pathetic exclamation ;—he was struck with astonishment. — “ Heaven ! ” (cried he) “ what do I hear !—Can

“ it be ?—No—yes ;—Did not the
 “ poor wretch repeat the name of
 “ Peggy, of Patty Summers ?—Yes
 “ she did—O gracious God ! ”—
 He instantly flew back to the spot
 in which he had seen her, but alas !
 she had left it ; — most probably
 had slipped down into some alley or
 passage in or near the place.—Mr.
 Summers traversed that spot, and
 the adjoining streets, for two hours
 after, in hopes of once more meet-
 ing this poor wretch, whom he
 doubted not to be *his sister* ;—for
 whom we have so long, and so vainly
 been seeking.

You will imagine, my dear friend,
 what I suffered at the absence of

my beloved George that night, or rather morning ; for he did not return till near two o'clock, having been all that time endeavouring (if by remaining near the above-mentioned spot he could once more see her) to find this wretched girl.

My fears that some accident had happened to my dear husband, had made me most miserable ; when at length he arrived :—pale and trembling, he flung himself into a chair, and asked for a glass of water :—“ O Lucy,” (said he, bursting into tears) “ I have at last seen
“ my poor lost Peggy ;—but, gracious Heaven ! how have I found
“ her !

“ her ! in what a wretched situa-
“ tion ! ”

He then, my dear, told me the above particulars of meeting her in the street, &c.—I leave you to guess the misery this discovery has given us ; — not but we have feared this to be their miserable resource—but yet——

I have not a shadow of a doubt but that this wretched girl is *our* poor Peggy—have you, my dear ?

Every night, since this affecting incident happened, has Mr. Summers, Mr. Fenwick, and another friend, been patrolling that part of the town where he saw her, and
where

where he supposes her usual haunts are. — May Heaven grant us patience to bear this trying calamity ! — As yet no traces can be found, which would lead us to a further discovery of their abode :—no doubt some wretched garret ;—nay, possibly not even *that* ;—O I shudder at the thought !

Divine vengeance at length seems to have overtaken, however, the abandoned man, who by his abominable *arts* first reduced these miserable helpless girls to this infamous way of life :—yes, my friend, Lord Racket, I am informed, has been some months in a swift decline ;—his body almost covered with pu-

trid ulcers, as offensive to himself as to all about him — the consequence of his excessive debauches. He has attempted, it seems, more than once to destroy himself by poison ;—at other times execrates his being, and his very God—horrible to tell !—A worthy relation of his sent a clergyman to pray by him ; but he bid him depart, with the most dreadful curses.

The fate of the infamous wretch, his pander, you already know.

The vile baronet, the chief associate of the above abandoned nobleman, is in a miserable plight, being obliged to fly his country to avoid a prosecution of the most serious

rious nature; having had the almost unparalleled cruelty and impudence to attempt the virtue of his own niece, a child of eleven years. — To what heights of wickedness will such infamous wretches arrive at, who make *vice* their only pursuit!

I most impatiently, my sweet friend, long to see you at the Abbey; but I fear a trip *now* to North Wales, in my present state, will be impracticable;—at least Mr. Summers, whose tenderness is above description, would not suffer me to run the hazard of so long a journey at this time:—he will hardly per-

mit me to *stir*, much less to travel above an hundred miles.—Remember, my dear, if the little stranger should prove to be a girl, and promise to be uncommonly *lovely*, that *Emma* must be her name.

I enter, my incomparable friend, into all the delicate distress of your situation with poor Ashley. It is certainly very singularly perplexing, that the marriage with his uncle should preclude (as it certainly must) any connexion more near than that of friendship:—the trial is great; but you, my heroic Emma, are equal to it: yes, you will nobly *triumph*, I doubt not.

not.—No doubt this everlasting *bar* is placed between you for great and wise ends, which mock all human foresight :—an alliance, depend on it, was not *good* for either :—so has *willed* the *Eternal Mind*. — A *tender Providence*, I doubt not, saw some adverse stroke, — some impending evil, — gathering over your heads, had the wishes of *both* been gratified ; and *kindly* drew the *providential cloud*. — I always think the restraints of Heaven are *merciful* as *just*.

Well says the poet,

“ Bravely we claim a *right* to our *undoing* :
 “ The *chains* that hold us, hold us from
 “ our *ruin*.”

But I forget that I am preaching and moralizing to one much more capable of it than I am ; and who is at this moment actually *practising* the severest duties of patience and resignation, as well as teaching them to all around her.

I almost envy our charming friend, Mrs. Belmont, the delight of seeing you every day : — narrow-minded wretch as I am !

You will write, I am convinced, very soon ; for you know your letters, next to seeing you, are my choicest delight : and pray be very *minute* in your accounts ; for be assured no incident, however trifling it may appear to you, but is of im-

portance to me, if it relates to my Emma ; such is the tender regard of, my dear friend,

Your most faithful and
affectionate,

Lucy S.

P. S. Mr. Summers, who loves you as much as I do, sends an hundred good wishes for your happiness.—Say every thing to Mrs. Belmont that can assure her of my affectionate regard.—Ah ! my dear, how happy should I be, blest with the most tender of husbands, and with the most amiable of friends ; —but the poor wandering sisters force me to sigh in the midst of

agreeable prospects:—pity and pray
for them. Once more adieu.

LETTER XXXI.

Mrs. Branville to Mrs. Sammers.

St. Maud's Abbey,
North Wales.

YES! my Lucy, I pity from
my soul, and pray for, the dear
unhappy girls.—I have not a doubt
but the wretched object you so af-
fectingly describe *must* be our poor
Peggy.—Heavens!—a falling tear
here makes this blot—a tear for
ruined innocence, like *that* we must
ever deplore.

Ah!

Ah! my dear, what a pathetic circumstance, that poor Mr. Summers should see his ruined, his lost sister, in such a situation!

We have *here* too, for the last ten days, had a most distressing scene:—my heart—my weak heart, is by no means calculated for so much anxiety.—

Poor Ashley is ill: — alas! — given *over* by his physicians! — A fever for some time has preyed on his spirits, which has baffled all medicine, and has at length brought him almost to the borders of the grave.—He was at Mr. Belmont's, when his illness increased so as to threaten the most alarming consequences,

quences, and there he still remains, extremely ill.—Mrs. Belmont (dear woman) will herself perform the office of nurse to the unhappy Edward; and indeed a most tender one she is.

I own to you, my dearest Lucy, that I am wonderfully affected with this illness of *poor* Ashley's.—Mrs. Belmont *will* have it, that since that prating fool, Mr. Forbes, made a discovery of *who* was the donor of a late present to Ashley, (of which you have had, I find, an account) — she, I repeat, says she is convinced, that since that *discovery*, the *unhappy* young man has been more than usually afflicted in his mind.—

mind. — If *I*, my dear friend, have been the cause—the innocent *cause*, I am beyond measure grieved:—how unfortunate—how *very* unfortunate, the affair came to his knowledge! — I thought myself *so* secure! — But I must hasten to tell you the affecting scene I have been witness to. —

A few evenings ago I received from Mrs. Belmont a short note, begging my immediate presence at their house, on a very particular occasion she said, but did not mention what. — I instantly ordered the chariot, and on my arrival found the above dear friend had been weeping:—she told me “ poor Mr.
“ Ashley,

“ Ashley, she believed, was dying.”
 — (His being ill at Belmont-hall I had before heard, and had often sent my compliments of enquiry after his health.) — I was exceedingly shocked at the account she gave me, which she ended with an earnest request of poor Ashley’s, it seems, that I would see him for one minute only.—“ Heavens !” (cried I, throwing myself into a chair)
 “ for what purpose ? — for what
 “ end ?—It is wrong—wrong be-
 “ yond expression, in him to ask
 “ it — for if he really does love”
 —I stopped at the little monosyllable *me*.——“ Wrong !” (said my friend) “ what impropriety is there
 “ —can

“ — can there be, *Mrs. Branville*,

“ in an *aunt* visiting a *nephew* ? ” —

This expression *aunt* was certainly most *rightly* urged in my dear *Mrs. Belmont*, as it was meant kindly to inspire me with all the *proper dignity* of such a *relationship* ; and I at once took her whole meaning in the right light : — I will be so honest to confess, my *Lucy*, I felt myself *ashamed*, — *hurt*, at my *girlish*, foolish behaviour. — I now *felt* the *littleness* of my ridiculous fears, in seeing my *nephew*, ill (when it certainly was my *duty* so to do) — and with all the fortitude I could assume, or *muster* to my aid, I desired *Mrs. Belmont* to conduct me to his

7

apartment.

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apartment. But how was I shocked at the melancholy object which first struck my sight! — my once beloved Edward pale, emaciated, supported by pillows in his bed; his head reclining on the breast of good Mr. Belmont. — I approached the bed; — “How does *my nephew*?” (said I in trembling accents) — “how does Mr. *Ashley*?” — At that moment methought a kind of faint blush overspread his cheek, and he feebly held out to me his emaciated hand: — “This — this is kind indeed,” — (said the poor youth.) — O Lucy, what did I suffer at that moment! — but avaunt! these killing reflexions. — He continued, —

“Now

" *Now* I shall die in peace : — *now*

" I have not a wish left : — to see

" *you*, madam, is ample recompence

" for — for all." —

At this moment Mr. Belmont,
(which I was sorry for) left the
room ; whether by the desire of
poor Edward I know not : — he re-
clined his languid head on the pil-
low : — " I could not" (said he in
broken accents) " die till I had seen
" — had *thanked* you — most gene-
" rous" (he was pleased to say)
" of women, for your — exalted
" donation." — " I beseech you,
" Mr. Ashley," (interrupted I) " not
" to mention it ; — you will oblige
" me, never more to speak or think
" of

“ of it—it is too trifling—to”——
 “ Well—well !”—(said he) “ Hea-
 “ ven will reward you — when I
 “ am — nothing. — I wish not in-
 “ deed to live — and yet *I have*
 “ *bad attachments* to this world—
 “ may have”—(sighing)—“ which
 “ nothing can subdue—no !—not
 “ even the cold hand of death.”
 — Then, looking at me, with in-
 expressible tenderness, as if he had
 forgot the circumstance of my hav-
 ing been the wife of his uncle,
 “ *Emma,*” (said he) “ do you re-
 “ member when I saw you in the
 “ hazle grove at Ashdale ? — Do
 “ you remember you once lost a
 “ little miniature picture at Moss-
 “ hill ?”

“hill?”—(This circumstance, my Lucy, I well recollect, and never could find it.) — “*I*” (continued he) “was the thief:—you dropped
 “it from your pocket, in the little
 “wilderness near your house; and
 “I, unseen, there found it:—and
 “here—here” — (said he) “next
 “my *heart* have I ever since worn
 “it;—nor in the cold grave shall it
 “be separated from me—it shall
 “mingle with my dust.” — Indeed, next his heart I saw this picture, my dear friend, from the opening of his shirt bosom:—imagine what I felt! — “But, Emma,” (said he in the most tender accent)

“ tell me you forgive this theft
 “ — say you pardon me.” —
 “ Forgive ! ” (said I) “ O Hea-
 “ vens ! — yes — yes.” — (I was
 excessively fluttered, and hardly
 knew what I said : — he looked at
 me earnestly a moment.) — “ And
 “ will you — will you grant my last
 “ request ? ” (said he in much tre-
 mor.) — “ What is it ? ” (returned
 I) — “ indeed I wish Mr. Ashley
 “ happy.” — “ Then,” (cried he)
 “ let me *once* kiss your dear hand.”

I gave him my hand ; — I could
 not speak : — he took it, — pressed
 it to his beating heart. — “ It is a
 “ cordial,” — (said he) — “ for one
 “ moment

" moment let me hold it here in
 " sacred silence."—(O, my Lucy,
 what a moment was that!)—he
 then imprinted a kiss on it, crying,
 " Emma! this hand—this little
 " hand of yours—you gave *away*."
 —At that moment his delirium of
 the fever returning, he began to
 ramble.—" You gave away your
 " own—my happiness——yes—
 " —yes—yes—ungrateful as you
 " are."—(Then peering in my face)
 —" You are not *my Emma Harvey*!
 " See!—see! you are led to church
 " —ha!—my uncle!—but be-
 " fore you wed him, let us, my
 " love, walk in yonder myrtle
 H 2 " grove.

" grove. — Hark ! — what sweet
 " music ! " —

O Lucy, what did I endure, to
 hear these soul-harrowing reveries !
 — I sat transfixed in silent grief. —

How long this sad scene would have
 continued, I know not ; for at that
 instant the physician arrived with
 Mrs. Belmont ; — he found his fever
 coming on, and I retired in an agony
 of mind I cannot describe. — " See "

(said I, afterwards, to Mrs. Belmont)

" the wretched effect of this visit of

" mine : — 'tis my presence, I fear,

" has occasioned the fatigue which

" has again brought on his fever. "

— I passed a wretched night ; —

but, thank Heaven! yesterday and this morning I hear he is rather better.—Mrs. Belmont tells me he awaked yesterday from a long slumber, seemingly refreshed and much composed. — “ I have seen her,” (cried he) “ I have had a visit from — who do you think, Mrs. Belmont?” — “ Nay, I know not,” (said she) — “ Don’t tell any one,” (returned he) “ not that old prating Forbes; — but indeed, my Emma Harvey has kindly seen me;—was it not good, very good in her?—Ah! Mrs. Belmont, I *could* tell you—but eternal silence” (putting his hand to his lips) “ shall seal the fatal secret.”

I pray incessantly for his recovery, He is ordered, I find, by his physicians to try the Hotwell, Bristol.—I begin to hope those healing waters, joined with his youth, and the life of strict temperance he has always led, will in time restore him.—You wished me, my dear, to be very *minute*; and I think indeed I have now fully complied with your request.

Pray tell Mr. Summers I wish for nothing so much as the sight of you at the abbey; — nay, remember I *will* have no denial.—I insist on it, that the little stranger, which you tell me will now soon make its appearance, be one of the party;—I shall provide a *nursery* on purpose,
in

in the most quiet part of the abbey:
—whether it be a little George, or,
as you kindly say, an *Emma*, it will
be equally welcome as its dear mo-
ther, and very worthy father, to,

My beloved Lucy,

Your tenderly affectionate

Emma B-----.

P. S. Our charming Mrs. Belmont
has much endeared herself to my es-
teem, by her very tender cares of
poor Ashley. — She sends you an
hundred loves, and all imaginable
good wishes.

DURING the space of the follow-
ing three months, nothing happened

material to the thread of our history. The amiable friends, as usual, corresponded ; but their letters, as not necessary, are not inserted.—During this period, the good-natured reader will be pleased to hear, that poor Mr. Ashley began to find benefit from the Bristol water : after his recovery (if it should be perfected) he firmly intended to leave England for ever.—Mrs. Summers had now presented her worthy husband with a lovely boy ; and intended soon, with her little one and its delighted father, to set out for the abbey, on a visit to her charming friend ; but whilst she was preparing for putting this long journey into execution,

she

She received, to her great astonishment, the following letter from her beloved Emma.

L E T T E R XXXII.

Mrs. Branville to Mrs. Summers.

St. Maud's Abbey.

“Who, Providence, shall trace thy secret
“steps,
“Measure thy counsels, or direct thy
“plans?”

MY DEAR LUCY,

I Have a most extraordinary event to relate, which I am convinced will give you equal pleasure and astonishment. I should have written a fortnight since, but have been waiting

waiting all that time to be able to give you the *sequel* to a most wonderful affair that has happened here.—O my beloved friend! how shall I tell you—that Ashley—the amiable Ashley, is *not*, it seems, on the most indubitable proof, the *nephew*, after *all*, of Mr. Branville:—True as you live.—What an amazing discovery!

Just Heaven! how can we ever enough adore thy wonder-working hand, that, by means which mock all human foresight, has brought this astonishing matter to light?—But let me hasten to *unravel* to my Lucy (the friend of my soul) this mystery; as I know she is at this
moment

moment on the very *rack* of curiosity.—Expect, however, no connexion—*that* is impossible in a mind so *agitated*:—indeed, no language can express what I have felt for this last fortnight, whilst the matter remained doubtful;—but now all mysteries relative to the astonishing event are cleared up—*now* we are all joy and rapture.—But it is cruel in me to keep you so long in anxious suspense—here then, take the wonderful particulars.

About a fortnight since, as Mrs. Belmont was one evening, with me, rambling, in this sweet month of June, in the most solitary part of a

little adjacent village, and stopping at two or three cottages to enquire after the health of some of *our* patients there, a young woman, who saw us pass by the door of a small farm-house, instantly rushed out—
 “For God’s sake,” (said the girl with great earnestness) “be so kind
 “to tell me which of you ladies is
 “madam Branville.”—“My name”
 (said I) “is Branville:—but what is
 “your business with me?”—“O
 “madam!” (returned she) “my
 “mother lays at that little farm-
 “house very ill:—indeed,” (said the girl, bursting into tears) “I be-
 “lieve she will die:—she came as
 “far as out of Cheshire with me
 “last

“ last week, to unfold a secret (she
 “ has long had lay heavy at her
 “ heart) to squire Branville; but
 “ now hearing he is not living, it
 “ must,” (she says) “ be revealed
 “ to your ladyship. My poor mo-
 “ ther was took ill on her long jour-
 “ ney, and with the greatest diffi-
 “ culty I got her to this place but
 “ yesterday. I heard you was now
 “ passing by, and I took the liber-
 “ ty of coming out; I hope, ma-
 “ dam, no offence.”

“ No child, certainly,” (said I)
 —and was turning round to go
 into the little wicket that led to the
 house, when my good friend Mrs.
 Belmont, who has more *her wits*
 about

about her at all times than your poor Emma, pulled me by the sleeve, softly whispering,—“ This is, methinks, an odd story of this girl’s :—why should she be so very pressing to see you ?—It is very strange :—the world is so full of mischief, I know not what to think ; — it may be some scheme to get you into the house. If you will take my advice, I tell you what I think you had better do ;—tell the girl you will come to-morrow morning ; when we will come with Mr. Belmont and Sir Thomas Douglas, (who is, you know, now with us ;) then if she has any thing to declare, let her

“ speak

"speak it."—This good advice of my friend, I readily came into:—we accordingly told the girl, it was then so late in the evening, (being almost dark) that we would defer calling on her mother till the next morning, when we certainly would, at the hour of eleven.

We found Mr. Belmont and Sir Thomas walking in the avenue, before B---- hall, in great anxiety for our late stay.—Mr. Belmont, who is one of the most agreeable of men, rallied us much on the mystery of our staying out so late.—"Very fine, ladies, indeed," (said he, when he found us *safe*, and his fears were over—) "I'll lay my life
"this

" this is some private assignation
 " you have been upon : — what,
 " strolling all this time among the
 " Welch mountains ? very pretty,
 " indeed ! " — " Hear him, Emma ! "
 (cried Mrs. Belmont, laughing.) —
 We now gave the gentlemen a particular account of the girl's request ; they both thought we had done quite right in deferring our visit till the morning. Accordingly, at the appointed hour we all sat out in the coach, on this strange, and, for aught we knew, *perilous* expedition. — Much pleasantry, however, passed in our way to the farm-house, where we were to find the old woman, who had this strange mystery to discover ;

—Mr.

—Mr. Belmont laughed, and said, he wished he had put a pistol in his pocket:—"We shall be *decoyed*," (said he) "into some old barn, among a gang of gypsies, depend on it.—Sir Thomas Douglas," (continued he) "is luckily a justice of peace;—something tells me, we shall have the old lady laid by the heels."

In this jocular manner we talked and laughed till we arrived at the house:—we were conducted into a room, and there indeed saw a very old woman, sitting in an armed *wicker* chair, apparently very ill, the woman of the house giving her drops and water, and the girl

we had seen the preceding evening holding her head.—I now advanced to the old woman:—“I am now come to hear what you have to reveal,” (said I) —“I am the widow of Mr. Branville; you may unburthen your mind to me. — These are all my best friends,” (looking round on those who accompanied me) “you may speak freely; but don’t hurry yourself, good woman—you appear very ill.” — “Ah! madam,” (returned she, bursting into tears) “I am not a *good woman*; I am a sad wicked wretch, and the Lord have mercy on my soul;—but I am haunted night
“ and

"and day, till I have cleared my
 "conscience:—I did a sad thing,
 "to be sure."—"What is your
 "name," (said I) "and who are
 "you?"—"My name, madam,
 "is Perry; I have been all my
 "life-time a nurse by profession—
 "more's the pity:—I live down
 "in Cheshire;—every body there
 "knows old nurse Perry.—To be
 "sure poor Sir Charles is in a bad
 "state of health, but I am certain
 "he will come up if the poor
 "child (*child* I call him *still*) be
 "yet above ground."—"This
 strange mysterious discourse of the
 old woman increased our curiosity
 and wonder.

We were now all seated, as my friends, she said, might hear what she had to unfold. She again took some drops, to enable her to begin her story; which, as near as I can recollect, she did in the following words, whilst we all sat round in the utmost astonishment:—

“About twenty years ago,”
 (said the old woman) “I was sent
 “for to Sir Charles Richmond’s, his
 “lady having been delivered, about
 “a month before, of a lovely boy;
 “which I was desired to take
 “home to nurse, as her ladyship
 “said she could then often see it,
 “my cottage being close to the
 “park.—I took it home that very
 “night,

"night, and a lovely babe it was
 "as ever the sun shone on,—In
 "about a month afterwards ma-
 "dam Ashley, sister to the great
 "'Squire Branville," — (O Lucy,
 what a *twinge* did I feel at my heart
that moment at the name of *Ash-*
ley! an hundred thoughts at once
 rushed upon me—of yet I knew not
 what. The woman continued)—
 "That good lady also was brought
 "to bed of a son some little time
 "before:—he was a puny sickly
 "child, and madam Ashley de-
 "sired I would take and nurse him
 "with little master Richmond:—
 "I did so for three months.—But
 "now comes my great offence;
 "God

"God forgive me!—The two great families were gone to London for the winter, and both the children I had to nurse were seized with the measles: master Ashley was such a poor weakly thing, he died of the distemper the third day; and what did I do (wicked woman as I was) but write up word to London that it was the son of Sir Charles Richmond that died, instead of Ashley?"—"What," (interrupted I, EAGERLY) "induced you to make use of that deception?"—"Ah! madam," (said she) "a very base reason: Lady Richmond was, to be sure, a covetous,

"hard

"hard lady to deal with, and the
 "advantage I had from her was
 "not near so great as from ma-
 "dam Ashley; so, for the sake of
 "curled lucre of gold, I *palmed*
 "master Richmond on her for her
 "son. She soon came down into
 "the country, and thinking the
 "child her's, rewarded me largely
 "for my care.—Lady Richmond
 "never returned, for she went to
 "France, and there died; so that
 "my wicked deceit prospered as I
 "could wish.—Sir Charles was
 "greatly afflicted for the death of
 "his son, it being his only child,
 "and a great estate depending."

—"So then, dame Perry," (said

"God forgive me!—The two great
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 he died of the distemper the
 third day, and what did I do
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 write up word to London that it
 was the son of Sir Charles Rich-
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 "France, and there died; so that
 "my wicked deceit prospered as I
 "could wish.—Sir Charles was
 "greatly afflicted for the death of
 "his son, it being his only child,
 "and a great estate depending."

—"So then, dame Perry," (said

Mr. Belmont, giving *me* a most penetrating look) “you *palmed* Sir Charles Richmond’s only son and heir on Mrs. Ashley for hers?”——“Even so, sir,” (continued she;) “he remained with me till madam Ashley died, when her brother, ’Squire Branville, took the child to himself, and educated him.”——(“O Heavens!” exclaimed I; and before Mrs. Belmont could reach me her smelling-bottle, I was sunk back in my chair in a fainting fit. What the old woman thought of my disorder I know not; but however, by the kind aid of my friends I was at length restored, and we were once again all seated.)

feated.)—" Now," (said the nurse)
 " I have heard down in Cheshire
 " that 'Squire Branville had turned
 " the poor young gentleman lately
 " out of doors ; and then my con-
 " science began to haunt me day
 " and night, as I had been the
 " wicked cause, by my deceit, of
 " keeping him from his father, and
 " all his great riches, his paternal
 " inheritance."——" Should you
 " know" (said Sir Thomas Dou-
 " glas) " the young gentleman if you
 " were to see him ?"——" *Should*
 " *I know him !*" (said the old nurse)
 " aye, that I should, among ten
 " thousand : — I should know the
 " sweet fellow — I should know
 master

"master Edward Richmond —

"Edward was the name of both

"the children;—besides, he had the

"mark of a tulip on his breast."—

"*That indeed*" (cried Mrs. Belmont

hastily) "he has;—for in his fever

"you know, my dear," (said she

to her husband) "when his phyfi-

"cian ordered a blister to be put

"on his right side, I was present

"when it was applied, and plainly

"saw the mark of a tulip on his

"breast, which I afterwards men-

"tioned."— "I mind not of now."

(The matter now really beginning

to be of a very serious nature, Sir

Thomas and Mr. Belmont retired

into the little garden belonging to

to them

the

the house, to confer on what steps were most proper to be taken in this interesting affair.—The result of their conference was, to send directly for Mr. Ashley from the Hot-wells; and another special messenger into Cheshire for Sir Charles Richmond, who certainly, at all events, would take the journey on such an interesting occasion.

The old woman mentions another proof of the *identity* of Mr. Richmond, which is a *scar* on his chin, and which is very obvious.—I have indeed always observed this little *scar*, which is far from a blemish, and used to be frequently hid in a small *dimple*.—This mark, the nurse
says,

says, was a burn; and Mrs. Belmont declares, she has often heard him say it was so when he was a child at nurse.

We now returned to Belmont-hall. — I leave you to guess my situation of mind: I took care not to be too *sanguine*, however, in my — *hopes*, shall I say?

Mr. Belmont instantly dispatched a special messenger for the amiable Edward; another likewise set off for the seat of Sir Charles Richmond, with the utmost haste. The old nurse was privately conveyed to Belmont-hall, to stay there till the arrival of the gentlemen, lest, in case of all this being no more than a
mere

mere imposture, she should make her escape :—but the poor wretch, we found on her arrival at the hall, so extremely ill, that we were under the greatest apprehensions she could not live till the gentlemen that were sent for came.—O my Lucy ! what did I suffer in that miserable interval !—I will be so honest as to say, my whole earthly happiness depended on the *authenticity* of this very interesting discovery.—A week was spent in this most anxious state of suspense. At length the amiable Edward arrived ; his health evidently better from the Bristol water.—Never did he appear so lovely :—an air of animation—of joy, had taken

taken possession of his fine countenance, from some *certain hints* being given, in Mr. Belmont's letter to him, relative to this amazing discovery; which, I flatter myself, were as agreeable, as *interesting* to him, as to your Emma:—it must however be imagined, till the actual arrival of Sir Charles Richmond, his heart could not be in a very *easy* state.—Much, my dear friend, depended on this very interesting event:—a lost and most worthy father, to whose affectionate bosom he was going to be restored;—a noble estate, the paternal inheritance of an ancient and respectable family;—and, shall I add, perhaps *some hopes*.

that as the *bar* which opposed our mutual happiness was now going to be removed, in all probability we should avail ourselves of it.

In the evening of the same day which brought us Edward, the worthy Sir Charles Richmond likewise arrived: — never did I behold a more sensible well-bred man

The parties were now conducted into the room of the old nurse:—Sir Charles instantly remembered the face of the woman, and called her by her name; — whilst, with eager eyes, she hastily exclaimed,—“ Yes —yes, that—that is indeed my —master Edward.”—She then tore open his shirt bosom, “ See here,”

(says

(says she) " the tulip on his breast, " the scar on his chin ! " — Sir Charles most perfectly remembered the above marks on his son, when nursed by this woman ;—adding the particular circumstance, that whilst lady Richmond was pregnant of him, she was gathering a beautiful *tulip*, from which flew out a large bee and stung her breast.—" Gracious Heaven," (said he) " he is—" " he is my son ! "—Indeed there wanted nothing of *resemblance*, to ascertain this interesting fact, greater than could be found betwixt the *countenance* of the *father* and son :—the same eyes—the same mouth,—in short, the most striking likeness

was

was exhibited betwixt both, the difference of *years* excepted.

To finish this amazing discovery, Sir Thomas Douglas, advancing to the old nurse, asked her if she would, before him and another justice of peace, make an affidavit of this matter?—To this she most earnestly said, she would that moment; and also, that she would take the sacrament on it, by the hands of the minister of the parish, as her last dying words; but begged it might soon be done, as she found her *end* very near approaching. — Accordingly she made a most solemn affidavit of this discovery, and in the presence of twelve persons took the sacra-

ment on the truth of it.—We could, indeed, desire no *greater* affirmations;—the proofs were as great as possibility could produce. —

“ These—these,” said the woman, “ are my last dying words.”—They were indeed so;—she soon after grew speechless, and fell into a convulsion, which carried her off.—It appeared as if Providence had miraculously preserved her existence to effect this discovery; for it seems, on the road from Cheshire hither she travelled with a fever on her all the way, and seemed only supported by the ardent desire of clearing up this mystery.

I leave you to guess, my friend,

the

the joy which now took place:—
 doubt was *now* at an end.—The de-
 lighted father, the enraptured son,
 hung on each other's necks in speech-
 less extasy:—"Have I then found
 thee, my poor boy?" (said the good
 Sir Charles) "O heavenly—happy
 meeting!" — Young Richmond
 (no longer Ashley) was almost wild
 in his expressions of joy.—Mrs. Bel-
 mont will have it, that when he paid
 his compliments to me, in return for
 my congratulations on this happy
 event, we *both* shewed such *evident*
 marks how much *interested* we were
 in the discovery, that she is convinced
 Sir Charles Richmond and all the

company observed our extreme agitation.—Perhaps so, Lucy—I cannot help it.—I am interrupted—I will date again.—

Wednesday Evening.

The above was written four days since, and I waited (it being too large a packet to go by the post) to send by a neighbouring gentleman, who is going to town as to-morrow. — Edward sighs, and looks—but they are not the sighs of a *despairing* lover:—his *looks*, however, tell me a great deal. — He seems as if he wished I would give him an opportunity of opening his heart:

heart :—he can tell me nothing, my dear, but what *my own* suggests :—I have as yet not given him one single opportunity of speaking to me alone ; — Mr. and Mrs. Belmont say, I am as *cruel* as a *tygress*. — I have a vast belief, that this amiable lover *elect* of mine, has already declared his sentiments for me to his father ; — (with whom, by the bye, I am absolutely delighted ;) for the worthy man pays me such uncommon respect — looks on me with such tenderness in his manner, and seems so much to observe my every word and action, that I am convinced he suspects *something* is in the wind. — He is, I think, of his

age, the most agreeable man I know, but appears in an ill state of health, which seems to threaten a speedy decay.

I have written the chief part of this very long epistle at Belmont-hall, where I have been staying with my charming friend.—“Ah! Emma,” (you cry) “was there no other reason?—I rather suspect you could not—at least *your heart* would not permit you to return to the abbey, till the *interesting* discovery was fully ascertained.”

—Well, Lucy, I give you leave to think as you will.

I suppose at this hour there is not under the cope of heaven so *happy*
a set

a set of beings as those now under the roof of Belmont-hall :—O that my Lucy was here, to add to the number !—But adieu :—it is not impossible but in a very short time I shall be addressed in *form*, by the most amiable of men.—I shall write again very soon ; mean time believe me,

Most truly and affectionately,

Your's,

Emma Branville.

Mrs. Belmont is much your's.

Sir Charles Richmond has provided very handsomely for the daughter, and the rest of the children of the old nurse, who made this very interesting discovery. — I began my

letter, Lucy, with a scrap of *blank*
verse; and I end it with the follow-
 ing ones in *rhyme*; (the author I
 forget)

“ Virtue, rejoice, — tho’ Heaven may
 “ *frown* awhile,
 “ That *frown* is but the earnest of a *smile*;
 “ One day of tears presages years of joy,
 “ Misfortunes only mend us, not destroy.”

LETTER XXXIII.

Mrs. Branville to Mrs. Summers.

St. Maud’s Abbey.

YES, my Lucy, I have had a
 declaration of the most tender
 passion, at length, from the amiable
 Richmond:

Richmond:—by his early application, one should imagine he feared some one might supplant him in my esteem;—but his fears were needless; for, without a blush, to *you* I confess, my faithful friend, that *Edward* alone

“ Possesses *every* thought. ———

“ If Virtue were to take a human form,

“ To light it with her smiles and nameless
“ grace,

“ O! she would chuse the person of my
“ Richmond.”

It is certain this most amiable of men has not been *tardy*:—for one single fortnight only elapsed (which I will suppose he gave to *delicacy*) before the offer of his hand, his person, and fortune, were made.

—Shall

—Shall I confess to you, my dear, an honest truth?—to you, who are so well acquainted with this *weak woman's* heart of mine?—Do you know, (such is the unaccountable impatience or petulance of the human mind!) that I began to be *very seriously* alarmed that my lover deferred *so long* his eclairsissement?—the *fortnight* to me appeared ten years.—“Perhaps, after all,” (said I to myself) “he may have *now* “dropped all thoughts of me;— “or does he think himself so *sure* “of me?—This Bristol journey “may possibly have effected as “wonderful an alteration in his “*heart* as in his *health*:—public “places,

" places, as Bristol Hot-wells, Bath;
 " &c. abound with young and
 " beautiful ladies ; it is most likely
 " he has received some *new* impres-
 " sion. — Ah ! wretched Emma !
 " you have been much, much too
 " sanguine in your expectations ;—
 " and possibly I have mistaken a
 " few sighs and looks of his, since
 " his return (for some lady he
 " has left behind) to be designed
 " for *me*, — foolish woman as I
 " am ! — Was I (ridiculous as I
 " am) to suppose, that because, in
 " the delirium of his fever at Bel-
 " mont-hall, he rambled about our
 " former happy days at *sweet*
 " Moss-

“ *Moss-bill*, that any *serious* conse-
 “ quences would arise from it?—
 “ Simple, simple Emma!—pos-
 “ sibly, after all, his father may
 “ have other views;—some alliance
 “ of a *Cheshire* lady, most likely:—
 “ ’tis true, Sir Charles Richmond
 “ has behaved to me with much
 “ partial regard;—but one is so
 “ mighty apt to fancy, forsooth,
 “ every little attention to *be parti-*
 “ *cular*!—Most probably the re-
 “ spect he has shewn me was on ac-
 “ count of my being *Mr. Branville’s*
 “ widow (whom I think he said he
 “ formerly knew when they were
 “ young men at Oxford) and not
 “ from any thoughts he had con-
 “ ceived

"ceived I should become his *daughter*.

"*ter.*"

Thus, my Lucy, did I torment my foolish heart; — was there ever any thing equal to my petulance? — I had been returned to the abbey about a week, after all matters relative to the interesting *discovery* had been settled, but in that time saw nothing of Mr. Richmond here. — "*He might*" (thought I) "*have walked over by this time,*" "*one should have imagined.*" —

(You remember, my Lucy, it is only one *half mile* betwixt Belmont-hall and the abbey.

I had really worked up my pettish impatience yesterday to such a height,

height, that in much inquietude of thought I sauntered in the evening into a little wilderness, in the most remote part of the gardens, merely to vent my chagrin.—I seated myself in a romantic small arbour, made of eglantine and honeysuckles intermixed, and with a lute I carried with me, the evening being remarkably fine, thought to amuse my pensive reflections with a song.

The moon just then rising, as Milton says,

“In clouded majesty”——

the balmy breath of surrounding roses; — the solemn silence that reigned throughout; — all together made the sweet scene ravishing.

I took

I took

"I took up my lute, and, after a few sighs, sung to the instrument a favourite air of that elegant composer, Dr. Arne, to these words :

" On every hill, in every grove,

" Along the margin of each stream,

" I rove, and *Edward* is my theme ;

" The hills, the groves, the streams remain,

" But—*Edward* there I seek in vain."

I had scarce finished this song with a sigh, when I heard, methought, a little rustling among the boughs, in a winding path that was close to the bower where I was sitting : — I looked up ; — but oh, Lucy ! what was my emotion—my wonder, when I saw the most amiable—the beloved youth advancing
to

to the harbour: — I believe I was near fainting: — but, summoning all my powers to my aid, — “ Bless me!” (said I) “ Mr. Richmond, — how you have surprized me!”

(Alas! my Lucy, he certainly heard my *song*, and its *subject*: — I was ready to die with *shame*.) — He tenderly took my hand, — made a thousand apologies for his *intrusion*, as he called it: — made me a most excessive *fine* speech (which I shall not repeat) on my *taste* in the choice of a *retreat*, fit for the Queen of Love: and I know not what: — but his flutters — his tremors, were as visible as my own. —

A short

A short silence now took place; and I really, my friend, at that moment, would have given the world to have been absent, though but half an hour before I was sighing, — dying, for his presence : — such strange unaccountable mortals are

! — — — — —
 He broke silence first, in a kind of formal manner, observing how wonderfully better he was for the Bristol air, and the waters.

“ No, madam ! ” (said he) ; “ my recovery is owing to another cause ! ”

The *bar* to his happiness (he said) was now removed ; — and you

may guess, Lucy, the subject that now took place.

I cannot *describe*, what is *un-describable*: suffice it to say, my lover made the most passionate, final declaration my heart could wish.

Affection on my side would have been preposterous:—I gave it to the winds, and most frankly confessed my sincere esteem:—esteem! what a general word!—in short, I confessed an *affection*, tender as *delicacy* would permit.

How long this interesting discourse would have lasted, I cannot say — had not my repeating watch struck eleven.—“Fine doings, Emma!”

"ma!" you will say.—I then rose, and with slow steps we walked to the abbey.

I perceive I shall be importuned for an early day, all objections being now removed ;—but, my dear, most firmly shall I oppose giving my hand to Mr. Richmond, till my year of *widowhood* is expired :—three months of that time are yet to come.—I know you, my Lucy, —I know Mr. and Mrs. Belmont, will join with my Edward in setting aside these *forms* and punctilios :—but I am, remember, *inflexible* in this determination : — I shall ever pay that perfect respect to the memory of Mr. Branville, his many good qua-

lities demand ;—I owe to him my noble fortune ; and shall ever speak and think of him with the sincerest gratitude.—I however am now certainly at liberty to dispose of my hand to a man every way unexceptionable.—

This instant have I received your kind letter *, in which you tell me, you purpose, with your little George, to be at the abbey on Thursday.—Imagine my joy !—it can only be exceeded by the sight of my beloved friend ; who I beg will believe

I am,

Most truly and affectionately hers,

Emma Branville.

* This letter appears not.

TWO months now passed, in which Mr. and Mrs. Summers were with their amiable friend at the abbey: nothing during that period happened, necessary to our history.—It may be easily supposed, our young and much enamoured Mr. Richmond was almost continually with his charming Emma.—He pressed *ardently* (but *vainly*) she would fix an earlier day than her *delicacy* had suggested:—but she remained invariable. Distant preparations were however begun to be made, when about this time died the worthy Sir Charles Richmond; by whose death the ancient title of baronet, with a clear estate of eight

thousand pounds *per annum*, devolved to his excellent son, now Sir Edward Richmond. — Thus was this all-accomplished youth, by the wonder-working hand of Heaven, raised in its own good time, by means which mock all human foresight, from the lowest depth of despondency, misfortune, and all the miseries of a dependent fortune, to wealth, honours, and, what was infinitely more precious to him, the approaching possession of the lovely woman he had so long adored. May *this* be a lesson to be engraved on the hearts of all:

“ Let never those *despair* who trust in
 “ *Heaven.* ”

The marriage of these most tender and amiable lovers was, it will naturally be imagined, now deferred for a few weeks, in respect of the very recent death of Sir Charles. — A decent time, on that account, being now elapsed, and all matters duly adjusted, relative to so happy an event as the marriage of Sir Edward Richmond and the lovely widow, — we shall next present the candid reader with the following letter from Mrs. Summers to Mrs. Bennet, in London, of whom so much mention has been made in the former part of this history, and who, when Mrs. Branyville was at any time in town, was well known

and much esteemed by that excellent lady.

LETTER XXXIV.

Mrs. Summers to Mrs. Bennet.

St. Maud's Abbey.

DEAREST MADAM,

AS you kindly wished I would acquaint you of the long-expected and joyful event that was here on the point of being finished,—with the utmost pleasure I take up my pen to say, that the loveliest of women has this morning, in the chapel of the abbey, given her hand to

the

the equally amiable Sir Edward Richmond.—Never, I believe, did so amiable a couple enter the temple of Hymen.—Our sweet Emma, blushing “like the morn,” was habited in white, sprigged with silver, intermixed with small bunches of rose-buds embroidered :—her fine hair and neck were ornamented with a profusion of jewels.—Sir Edward was the finest figure of a young man (who on his wedding-day likewise came of age) imagination can form :—he was dressed in white, embroidered richly with silver.—The expression, the animation of his fine countenance, beggars all description :—had I not been told, he

bad

had been ill. I never could have believed it; for to me he appears the picture of health and youthful grace. — Bride-maid's Mrs. Belmont and I could *not* certainly be; but, as the dearest friends of the lovely bride, we assisted, as attendants, at the awful—joyful solemnity. — We were habited in pink and silver;—and if we may believe *our husbands*, never looked to so much advantage;—of this I am certain, that I never felt so sincere a delight, as in seeing this most amiable couple united for life:—had the happy event never happened, I should have been very wretched.

We

We are to have a grand ball, this evening, in the great saloon in the abbey; half the county are invited:—but that part of the entertainment I chiefly like is, the preparations which have been made for the poor for several miles round,—for their reception, tents are pitched in the park,—sheep are roasting whole,—whilst the young men and maidens are to dance to the pipe and tabor, on the lawn before the house.—I was wonderfully pleased with the circumstance, that two sweet little children of Mrs. Belmont's, of four and five years, dressed in the Arcadian style, each with a basket on its arm, slowly walked

walked before the bride and bridegroom, strewing the way with flowers. — The unexpected appearance of these lovely little ones, with the innocence and order they preserved in the procession, made it beyond description pleasing!

From the chapel we returned to a most elegant breakfast, attended by a band of music, chiefly clarinets and horns, with soft German flutes, properly placed in the high gallery, in the hall of the abbey. — Whilst we were seated at our elegant repast, joy in every eye, I softly whispered lady Richmond, — “ Can the world afford such a scene of felicity? — “ surely nothing *now* is to be wished

“ for.” —

“for.”—“Ah!” (said my sweet friend), “*nothing* seems indeed left “*now* to wish—except” (said she, softly sighing)—“our *poor* Peggy—“*our* *Patty*—could have been—and”—She stopped, whilst a tender tear of pity glistened in her mild eye.—O, my dear madam! what a heart has this charming woman!—few, I believe, in her present situation, would have bestowed a *thought*, much less a *tear*, on the poor, lost unfortunates.

I have only a minute left to finish my letter, being now enquired for—having *stole* from the company to write this.

I how-

I however cannot conclude without saying, lady Richmond, Sir Edward, Mr. and Mrs. Belmont, my beloved husband and myself, and Sir Thomas Douglas, all set out to-morrow, with a grand retinue, for the seat of Sir Edward, in Cheshire, most beautifully situated, and called Richmond House.

A servant going to town, I dispatch this with bridal favours, and a large quantity of bride-cake for your fair daughters, whom we heartily wish were to grace our ball this evening.

Lady Richmond presents all imaginable respects to yourself and
family :

family : — my George is much
yours ; and my little boy has
grown out of your knowledge ;
so much has the air of the Welch
mountains improved him.

Adieu, my dear Madam—

Believe me

Most sincerely yours,

Lacy Summers.

The CONCLUSION.

HAVING at length brought our virtuous lovers to that happiness their suffering merit so justly deserved, it is now high time to enquire after the two poor sisters, with whom our history began, and consequently with whom it should end.—Would we could say, the wretched girls had, previous to their last hours, been found in a situation, however *low*, yet gaining a *virtuous* livelihood!—but, as faithful historians, we are obliged to recite the *truth*.

We

We most commonly see, even in this uncertain state of things, that happiness, at least peace and comfort, flow from virtuous habits : — and that contrary habits are always productive of disease, disgrace, and misery. — 'Tis true, our poor unfortunate Peggy and Patty justly merit (from the vile arts of their first seducers) the tear of tender humanity : — it was their *persevering* in the wretched course of life (difficult, indeed, it was to obtain other means of support) that was reprehensible. — The *certain* consequences of *such* a life are too fatally proved in the following melancholy particulars.

Some months after Mr. and Mrs. Summers were returned from their delightful visit at Sir Edward Richmond's, after the happy celebration of his nuptials, as Mr. Summers was one afternoon walking through the Strand, he was accosted by a middle-aged poor woman, who begged charity.—As she did not shew any very *great* marks of distress, and appeared in good health, Mr. Summers bid her get work, as she seemed (he said) very well able to earn a support without begging charity.—“Alas! Sir,” (said the woman) “’tis *not* for *myself*. I ask relief:—“it is for two poor young creatures who lodge in a little garret of

" of mine in yonder alley : — they

" are indeed perishing with want :

" —two sisters !"——" Sisters !"

(said the compassionate Mr. Summers, whose attention was particularly excited, in the hope he might hear some traces of the poor girls he was always lamenting) —

" Sisters ! did you say ?" — (continued he)—" how long have they

" been with you ? — what is their

" way of life ?—and do you know

" their *names* ?"

" Their way of life" (replied the woman) " has been, I fear,

" what too many young creatures

" are driven to :—their name, I

" think, is—*Summers* ; but they al-

"ways call each other Peggy and
 "Patty."—"O gracious Heaven!" (exclaimed Mr. Summers;
 and at the sound of those long-lost
 and ever to be regretted names, his
 heart felt unusual agitation); —
 "Where are these girls?" (said
 he) "shew me the house—let me
 "see them."—"Nay" (said
 the woman) "they may be both
 "dead by this time, for what I
 "know to the contrary;—I looked
 "in upon them at eight o'clock
 "this morning, and they were very
 "ill:—they could hardly speak to
 "me."—"Lead the way, mis-
 "tress" (said the benevolent Mr.
 Summers) "to your abode."—The
 woman

woman did so; and, after turning down a street or two, came to a blind alley; and entering into a wretched habitation, she called her house, shewed her guest up stairs, into a miserable kind of back garret; where, in one corner, on an old wretched bedstead, lay indeed two young women, pale and emaciated, and in a situation that would have moved a breast of marble. — Mr. Summers most tenderly and considerately, lest his presence should have too sudden an effect on these miserable objects, stood for a few minutes behind a kind of screen, which served as a door to this wretched hole; — but, good Hea-

ven! what were the emotions of this
 worthy man, when he saw Peggy
 (for so indeed she was) endeavour
 to raise the head of the other un-
 happy wretch (who was just de-
 parted) on her bosom:—"Patty"
 (said she in feeble accents) "art
 " thou gone for ever?—stay,—
 " stay one moment for thy Peggy.
 " —Hah!—no more breathing!—
 " What! *indeed*, gone for ever!
 " Well—well!—'tis as it should
 " be.—O blessed comfort! that in
 " my arms Patty resigned her dy-
 " ing breath."——

Gentle reader, if this scene elicits
 a tear from you, I know not; but
 my own drops of *sacred pity* compel

me

me for a few moments to lay down
my pen.

Poor Mr. Summers, with a heart
almost bursting, now turned from
his hiding-place to the woman of
the house, and, giving her money,
desired her to fetch the richest cor-
dial she could procure; — and to
introduce him to the sad object,
whom he believed (he said) to be
near death. — “ Miss Peggy” (said
the woman) “ here is a good gen-
tleman come to relieve you.”

“ May I beg to know” (said Mr.
Summers, in a soothing accent)
“ your distress? — I am come to
“ comfort,

“ comfort, — to assist, — to relieve
 “ you. — What is your name ? —
 “ and who were your parents ? — Is
 “ that your sister on your bosom ? ”

— Mr. Summers here wept, in the
 most bitter anguish of soul ; whilst
 his wretched sister, fixing her dying
 eyes on his — (too weak — too near
 death to be agitated with the sight
 of a stranger) — in broken feeble ac-
 cents replied : — “ My name was
 “ Summers ; — it is *now* — *Misery*.

“ — My worthy parents * live at
 “ Ashdale in Cumberland. — My

* The unhappy circumstance of the
 death of Mr. and Mrs. Summers had ne-
 ver come to the knowledge of the wretched
 girl.

“ sister

“ sister here is gone a little while
 “ before me :—see,—she lies dead
 “ in my bosom. — We request of
 “ some charitable stranger a little
 “ earth to cover us——to shield us
 “ from ”——

Here she fainted. — Mr. Summers (who with difficulty could prevent himself from weeping aloud, and whose tears in large drops fell on the dying girl,—whilst he kissed the cold lips of the already departed Patty) tenderly raised Peggy in his arms. — The woman now returned with a cordial, and some warm wine he had ordered to be prepared :—this affectionate brother tried to pour a small spoonful down
 the

the throat of the heart-moving object he held in his arms: — she again opened her eyes, — “ Who, “ Sir, — who — are you ? ” (she asked, in a voice just articulate) “ Pray — “ pray — for the peace of my de- “ parting soul ; — let me sleep in “ the same grave with my cold “ Patty here : — hah ! have I got “ you *still* ! ” (endeavouring feebly to grasp her hand.)

Mr. Summers, almost distracted at this scene, replied, — “ I am — “ I am thy brother — thy brother “ George : — O live — my dearest “ sister, — live, and be happy still : “ thy brother’s arms — thy Emma’s “ arms — are open to receive thee.”

—At the name of *Emma* she breathed a piteous sigh, and laid her emaciated hand on her heart.—“Brother!—did you say?” cried she, in a hollow, dying accent, and faintly shook her head (most probably recollecting the fatal deception they had experienced in one under that endearing character):—then, looking at him with great earnestness, —“*Indeed*, my brother!”——(she just pronounced) —“receive my dying breath!”—and instantly expired in his supporting arms.

F I N I S.